

Octagon House,
LaSalle County
Mendota, Illinois

HABS No. Ill. 180

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. Ill. 1

Historic American Buildings Survey
Earl H. Reed, District Officer
435 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago

OCTAGON HOUSE
Mendota, LaSalle County, Illinois

Owner - Harry H. Wright

Date of Erection - About 1853

Builder - Warren Clark (first owner)

Present Condition - Good

Number of Stories - Two

Materials of Construction - Frame construction, limestone foundations. The siding is of hardwood, possibly oak. Square iron nails were used in erecting this building. The chimneys are of brick and the roof is now of tin; the original material is not known.

Additional Data - The house, one of the first residences in Mendota, has belonged to the following persons since it was sold by Warren Clark in 1863, Nathan and Caroline Newport to 1888, John Goedtner to 1892; Joseph Weidner to 1917; Amos Rutt to 1919 and Harry H. Wright to the present time, 1937.

It is said that the house was planned by someone in the east to withstand the heavy wind and storms of the western prairies. Others believe the octagon design was to furnish the maximum of sunlight. Between 1850 and 1860 many octagon houses were built in the middle west, all of about the same size but varying in material. There is a marked similarity in the plans. It is thought that many were patterned after Thomas Jefferson's home in Monticello. However, the popularity of the design soon gave out and we know of none built after 1860. It is interesting to note that the octagon houses, whether built of frame, stone or brick, that have been brought to our attention are still in excellent condition.

Since 1892 the small paned sash in the Mendota house have been replaced by single panes and a group of three windows put into the north sitting room, replacing an original group of two. The house originally had blinds which have been removed. Also an early kitchen at the northeast as well as a picket fence has been taken away. Another kitchen wing has been added to the house and a furnace installed in the basement.

Poplar Forest in Bedford Co. Virginia

Source - Mr. Harry H. Wright, present owner, who has furnished copies of deed as well as an account of his personal interviews with former owners.

By Margaret A Jones

Approved James Reed

ml 8/28/57